

SESARMA TRAPEZIUM DANA, 1852 (CRUSTACEA : DECAPODA):
PROPOSED SUPPRESSION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS¹
Z.N.(S.) 2016

By Lawrence G. Abele (*Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science,
University of Miami, Miami, Florida 33149, U.S.A.*)

The suppression of the specific name *trapezium* Dana, 1852, as published in the combination *Sesarma trapezium* and now known as *Metasesarma trapezium* is requested here. The identity of this species and the actual type locality have so far never been established with certainty. As the name is probably a senior synonym of that of a well known western Atlantic species it poses a threat to nomenclatural stability. Although the type specimen was stated by Stimpson (1861, *Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia*, 1861 : 372–373) to be in the Smithsonian Institution, a search of this institution, of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University and of the Peabody Museum of Natural History, Yale University failed to locate any type or other material of this species.

Dana (1852, *Crustacea. In United States Exploring Expedition during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, under the command of Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., 13 (1) : 1–685*) described the new species *Sesarma trapezium* from the "Sandwich Islands". He gave a short description and in 1855 (*Atlas. Crustacea. In United States Exploring Expedition during the years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, under the command of Charles Wilkes, U.S.N., pls. 1–96.*) published figures of this species. Stimpson (op. cit.) examined Dana's material in the Smithsonian Institution and placed *S. trapezium* in the genus *Metasesarma*. The material has since been lost, presumably having been destroyed in the Chicago fire of 1871 (see Evans, 1967, *J. Nat. Hist.*, 1 : 399–411).

The species *Metasesarma trapezium* has been mentioned by seven authors in eight different works but only Dana and Stimpson examined actual material, viz., the type material. Despite several surveys and much collecting in the Hawaiian Islands, the species has not been found there (Rathbun, 1906, *Bull. U.S. Fish. Comm.*, 23 (3) : 829–930; Edmondson, 1959, *Occ. Pap. Bernice P. Bishop Mus.*, 22 (10) : 153–202). In fact, no species of the genus *Metasesarma* is known to occur in the Hawaiian Islands.

Rathbun (1897, *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* 11 : 89–92) described the new species *Sesarma rubripes* from Bahia (El Salvador), Brazil. At that time she did not recognize the genus *Metasesarma*. In her 1918 monograph (*Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus.*, 97 : 320) she placed the species *S. rubripes* in the genus *Metasesarma* and noted a "suspicious resemblance" between this species and *S. trapezium*. She was evidently unaware of, or had overlooked the fact that *S. trapezium* had been placed in the genus *Metasesarma*.

¹Scientific contribution No. 1748 from the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science, University of Miami. This was supported by Research Grant No. 7075X from the National Science Foundation. I thank Dr. Lipke B. Holthuis for his advice and comments.

Comparison of Dana's description and figures of *S. trapezium* with descriptions, figures and material of *M. rubripes* reveals no differences between these two species and they should be considered conspecific. *Metasesarma rubripes* occurs in the western Atlantic, including the coast of Brazil. It is found there in areas visited by the U.S. Exploring Expedition where material was collected. It is a well known fact that the material collected during the U.S. Exploring Expedition has not been handled with proper care. It seems possible that the type material of *Sesarma trapezium* may have been mislabelled as to locality and that the material may have actually come from Brazil.

The name *Metasesarma rubripes* is used, as it is in smaller papers, such as Abele, 1972 (*Carib. J. Sci.*, 12 (3/4) : 165) and Moreira, 1903 (*Archos Mus. nac. Rio de J.* 12 : 112, pl. 1), in the fundamental works on the American Grapsidae by Rathbun (1918), in Boschi's (1964, *Bol. Inst. Mar. Biol., Argentina*, 6 : 64) monograph on the Argentinian Brachyura, in Diaz and Ewald's (1968, *Crustaceana suppl.*, 2 : 225) study on larval development and most recently in Chace and Hobbs' (1969, *Bull. U.S. Nat. Mus.*, 292 : 175) handbook on the freshwater and terrestrial decapods of the West Indies.

Thus in three major works on the systematics of the western Atlantic Brachyura, as well as in all smaller papers dealing with that fauna, the name *M. rubripes* has been consistently applied to a single well known species while the name *M. trapezium* has not been applied to any material since 1861. Regrettably, I am not able to provide more references than those by six authors in seven publications and I am therefore aware that the conditions laid down in Art. 79(b) of the Code are unfulfilled. The holotype (preserved in the British Museum of Natural History) and other material of *M. rubripes* is available while evidently no type material of *M. trapezium* is extant. In view of the well established usage of the specific name *rubripes* and the confusion which would result if this name were substituted by *trapezium* it seems best to suppress the latter name *trapezium*.

The action that is now requested from the International Commission of Zoological Nomenclature is that they:

- (1) make use of their plenary powers to suppress for the purpose of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy the specific name *trapezium* as published in the combination *Sesarma trapezium* Dana, 1852 and;
- (2) place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *trapezium* Dana, 1852, as suppressed under (1) above.